1:Du Bois E-5 (1938-1939) 1944
GFS Alor GFS

ing instance. Langoni, who was courting Kokonai by helping her with the storage of her harvest, suggested that they had better marry, by saying, "Who will eat this corn I am stacking? I had better come and eat it myself."

TOOTH BLACKENING

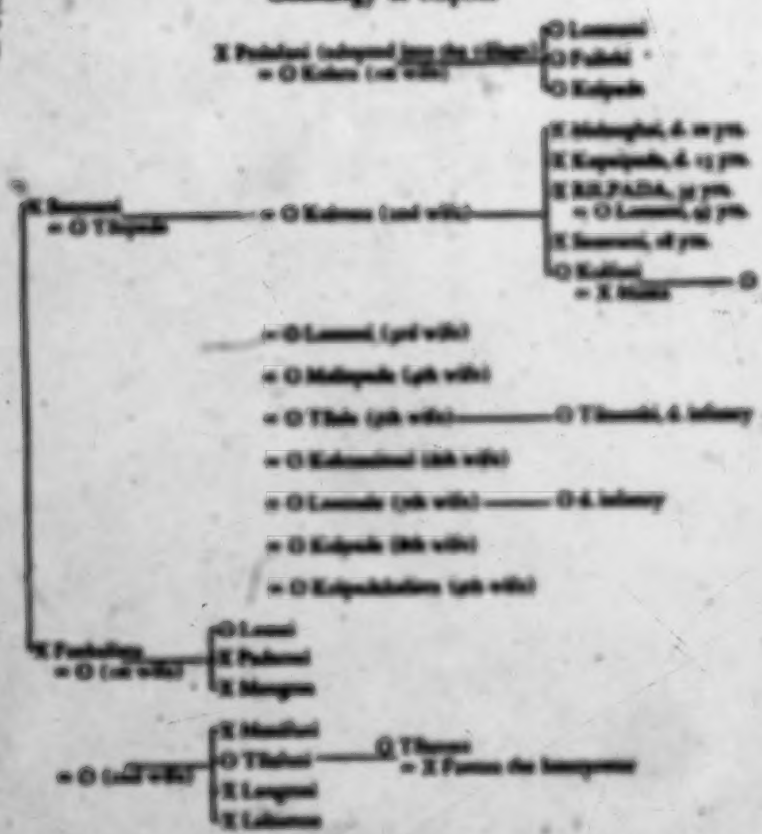
It is during this period of adolescence that both boys and girls have their teeth blackened and filed. Again the matter is optional, but since shiny black teeth are much admired and long uncovered ones are considered very ugly, practically every young person has his blackened and probably half have them filed. The process is more or less in the nature of a prolonged picnic, free from adult supervision. It is without doubt also a period of humor for many of the young people, although adults vigorously contradicted my phrasing it so.

The best indication of the sexual liberty current at this time is that stricter parents forbid their daughters to remain in remote field houses overnight and insist upon their staying at home or near by in the house of some responsible older kin. Further, when I visited such a group one evening at sundown just as the strips of dye were being passed out, the young man in charge of procuring and mixing the paste used to darken the teeth said merely to the children, "Now, no intercourse tonight" — a comment that produced a ripple of giggling among the boys and girls.

The actual procedure is as follows: In July or August some young unmarried man, perhaps in his early twenties, announces that he will blacken teeth for the children of the community and designates the field house where it will be done. This is the dark season agriculturally, so that girls can be spared from the fields. He purchases from some friend in the village of Bakudaiang a particular type of soil found there. This investment rarely exceeds five cents. With the earth he mixes a fruit resembling a small green fig. The resulting paste is smeared on a strip of banana bark which each child cuts to fit the size of his mouth. The preparation of each day's supply takes the better part of an afternoon. For at least seven nights, and often ten, the children sleep together in a field house, with the paste held against their teeth by the flexible bark strips. During the day boys unidiomatically hunt rats, and girls go to their fields to collect vegetable foods. The children all eat together, being careful to place small bits of food far back in their mouths in order not to spoil the dye. With the same objective a length of this bamboo is used as a drinking tube during the period. Surplus rats are smoked to preserve them for a feast on the last day.

The whole procedure reminds one very much of "playing house." It is a carefree time for all the young people. There are no taboos con-

Genealogy of Rilpada



[illegible] bamboo tubes full (twenty to thirty cans to a tube). When we finished blackening our teeth, we told the girls, twenty-two of them, to pound and cook corn. We had a feast. Each girl was given seven cans. We boiled the rest of the corn and drank the soup to set the dye in our teeth. There were thirty boys. When we returned to the village, Pademada, who had blackened our teeth, collected all of us together and we paid him. He got fifty-two arrows. Our elders had helped us collect them and there were none left over, so the next day our elders suggested that we shoot at targets for them. They set ten banana stalks at

about this, I said, "Good. Djemani and I have already said we don't 159[6]
want to marry, so he is free." [Actually a few days before, she had
joined forces with Mahemi, Djemani's first wife, in attacking Fale-
gangnon. This was the equivalent of insisting upon her status as one of
Djemani's wives. Her kinsmen dragged her away from the melee,
saying that she was not one of Djemani's wives, since he had never
paid a legitimate bride-price for her.]

March 11, 1939

[No dreams. The usual difficulty in beginning. I asked her about
teeth blackening, often a period of lessons for adolescents.]

First Maniemi said, "Lemani and Marwen, you must have your teeth
filed." So we went to Ataduni, who took a file and cut our teeth. I began
when the sun was just rising, and by midmorning I was finished. Then
Marwen had hers cut. It was early afternoon when she was done.
Then we each paid Ataduni five cowrie. We got the money ourselves
from selling yams in Kalabali. Marwen had bought the file for thirty
cowrie. Ataduni told us to boil cowrie, and when the water came to a boil
we put in the green, and as soon as the green were done we ate the 162
cowrie while it was still a little hard. "This makes your teeth stronger." 115
So we went home and did as he told us. We ate the cowrie to strengthen
our teeth. That evening people said they were going to start blackening
teeth the next day. The following afternoon all the young men
gathered, Maniemi, Fanon, Pubilang, Pedalani, all went to Alankolobo
to stay in a field house there. The boys told the girls to boil the fruit.
We said, "And what shall we use for a pot?" They said, "Use half of
this broken pot." So we said, "What shall we use for wood?" They
answered, "Use cassavalim. If you use cassavalim, our lips won't get sore
from the dye." So we cooked the fruit. Then we got long long and 159[7]
banana bark. The fruit we cooked, taking out all the skin and fibers. 55
Then we mixed it with earth and made a cone of it. We cut off the top
of the cone, just a little piece, and Fanon, one of the boys having his
teeth blackened, tossed it in the air, saying, "Air [shaking tassa, really
whispered], do not let our teeth be insufficient." Then he took another
bit and tossed it on the ground, saying, "Sabiah [village of the dead],
do not let our teeth be insufficient." Next we cut and measured the
banana-bark strips so they would fit our mouths and put the dye paste
on them. This we did for seven days. The boys hunted rats and the 159[8]
girls pounded yams. When it was over, we went to bathe. We got ar-
rows and pennies to pay the maker of the teeth. There were fifteen